

To:  
Tim Kabat, Mayor, City of La Crosse  
400 La Crosse St  
La Crosse, WI 54601

From:  
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RE: 3120 Farnam St home with proposed donation to the VA

Dear Mayor Kabat:

I have followed with great interest the efforts of the Erickson family to donate their home to the VA. Having lived in LaCrosse from 1978-2015, I still feel very connected to LaCrosse and all veterans. Please allow me to share my perspective on this project.

Both of my parents were World War II veterans. My dad was a POW under the Japanese for over three and a half years and suffered many atrocities; my mom was an Army nurse. Even though my dad had PTSD, depression, and massive medical issues, he contributed to his family, community and country. When he was a POW, he made a bargain with God that if he lived, he would spend his life in service to America. And he did.

He was a Post Master in Lidgerwood, ND for over 30 years. When he saw a need in the community, he tried to remedy it, such as spearheading a group in the community to build a swimming pool to keep children busy, creating a golf course, building a retirement home to keep our elders in our community, was a member of the volunteer fire department, helped renovate our church and many other activities. When he retired he volunteered at the Pima Air Museum, Tucson, AZ to restore WWII airplanes. Mom volunteered there also, in addition to the VA in Tucson.

Mom was a young nurse who was assigned to a very ill POW as he was processed back into the United States. That person would become her husband. She saw the physical and mental anguishes of war. She developed a plan to get this once young strapping farm boy back to health. Without her knowledge, love and support, he would have died.

Why does this matter concerning making the Erickson home into a VA facility for veterans? When I hear the **fear** that some people are creating about the veteran population living in the neighborhood, I have a visceral response. To say, "I support the veterans, but not in my neighborhood" angers me. If a veteran is not "safe enough" to be in your neighborhood, is he "safe enough" to join your church and give of his time and money? Is he "safe enough" to attend your college and share his life knowledge? Is he "safe enough" to serve on your fire department? Is he "safe enough" to protect you as a law enforcement member? Is he "safe enough" to lead a major company that employs hundreds of people? And on and on. The people that are creating these fears do so with great harm. Creating fear about a population is prejudice. Veterans are people. People that deserve *every chance* to assimilate back into a country and community **they fought to protect**.

My dad had no help from the VA when he came home from war. There was no such thing as mental health help in the 1940s. He was told to "forget it and get on with his life." The only reason he lived and was able to return to being a productive member of society was the mental and medical help from Mom, plus the unending support that he received from Mom, *the community* and his family. It seems to me that the business model that the Farnam Street VA facility has planned would give veterans the emotional and physical support that is so needed, just like my dad experienced.

The veterans are not a population to be feared. They are a population to be respected as our neighbors, our co-workers, our fellow church members, our mentors and our mentees.

If my hometown of Lidgerwood, ND had *feared* my dad and mom as veterans, they would have lost a great man and an amazing woman who made the town a better place to live; who gave so much of their time and talents to helping their neighbors; who raised five children to believe that it is our responsibility to give back to our communities; and finally, but certainly not the least, who continued to serve America, just like they did during active service, until they died.

Please take the opportunity to accept this generous gift and make it a true home to nurture our veterans toward a healthy productive life.

If you have questions or need clarifications, please contact me. I welcome your call.

Respectfully,



Jeannie M. Bush

Cc: La Crosse City Council

*Please distribute to all members.*  
*Jmb*